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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND COS DAUDZAI DISCUSS KARZAI'S GOALS
AND CLOSER COOPERATION WITH PALACE

Classified By: Ambassador Karl W.Eikenberry for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. At their May 27 meeting, Mohammed Umer Daudzai, President Karzai's Chief of Staff, agreed to the Ambassador's suggestion to establish a weekly meeting between President Karzai and the Ambassador. Daudzai confirmed Karzai was confident of re-election and the latter was turning his focus to improving government performance. Both agreed on the importance of timely coordination between Afghan authorities and coalition forces following civilian casualties incidents.

¶2. (C) On the issue of a one-on-one meeting, Daudzai agreed such meetings would promote closer communication and allow better follow up on issues of shared concern. Daudzai recognized the Ambassador and Karzai already met often, but agreed a standardized, one-on-one weekly meeting could improve coordination between the Embassy and the Palace.

KARZAI LOOKING PAST THE ELECTION TO GOALS FOR NEXT TERM

¶3. (C) Daudzai confirmed Karzai was privately confident of re-election and was beginning to focus on his strategy for the next five years. Karzai hoped to focus on building administrative capacity in government in his second term. Daudzai pointed to some progress at the provincial level, but the lack of capacity at the district level continued to pose serious obstacles in delivery of basic services. However, Daudzai added that the Afghan government and international community were correct to focus first on security in more troubled areas, introducing the necessary stability for development and capacity building.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador agreed there had been significant development progress in Afghanistan over recent years, and that a basic level of security was necessary for building up the public and private institutions in a community. Referring to his recent visit to Kunar, the Ambassador noted the burst of development that had taken place since his first visit in 2002, observing neither the development nor the improvements in local governance would have been possible without corresponding improvements in security.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION ON MILITARY-RELATED INCIDENTS INVOLVING CIVILIANS

¶5. (C) The Ambassador and Daudzai agreed on the importance of timely, accurate communication between the Afghan government and Coalition and U.S. Forces when military operations led to alleged civilian casualties. Both sides require real-time accurate and detailed information to respond quickly and accurately to media inquiries and public concerns. Daudzai noted there was a small 24-hour operations center in the Palace, saying this was an excellent coordination point for breaking information. Daudzai agreed with the Ambassador that it was important to be able to get the facts out accurately as soon as possible to pre-empt the enemy's inevitable information campaign.

AMBASSADOR CALLS ON KARZAI TO DRAW ATTENTION TO ACHIEVEMENTS OF SECURITY FORCES

¶6. (C) The Ambassador acknowledged the problems civilian casualties presented to the Afghan leadership and outlined ongoing U.S. and Coalition efforts to minimize the impact of military operations on civilians. However, he also noted the American people and the U.S. military had made a long-term commitment to Afghanistan's stability and he called on Karzai and his government to draw a clear, public distinction between the operations of Coalition and Afghan security forces aimed at protecting the Afghan people and the actions of the militants who deliberately targeted civilians and community infrastructure.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador referred to a recent operation in Khost in which Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and Coalition Forces successfully fought together to thwart 11 suicide bombers. The Ambassador suggested that, in the future, Karzai should travel to the site of such incidents not just to offer condolences, but to praise Afghan forces and highlight successful cooperation between ANSF and Coalition Forces. Daudzai agreed this would be a positive step and indicated Karzai was prepared to make such trips in the future.

EIKENBERRY